

Money will dictate implementing 5-year daycare plan

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By BRAD REAUME

The regional daycare plan for the next five years was unveiled to Halton's Health and Social Services Committee Monday. The plan considers Halton's child care needs and suggests that an increase in information for the public and quality control be implemented.

The number of possibilities is endless but the reality of the available budget will limit the program, says Bonnie Ewart, Commissioner of Social Services for the Region.

"The budget will drive the plan rather than the plan driving the budget," Ms Ewart said. "We have merged our activities with their costs and our available funds. We must be realistic."

Information, quality, planning, development and Regional involvement in child care were the concerns identified through a public consultation process.

An effort will be made to formulate a registry of all licensed and unlicensed facilities. Daycares which serve

more than five children are required to be licensed. The registry will provide information for those who move to the area or for those who require the service for the first time.

Currently there are approximately 20,100 children who need daycare in the Region, according to the report, and a shortfall of 900 places. About 83 per cent of those in daycare at present are serviced by the informal, unlicensed sector. Currently Halton provides 2.1 per cent of the total daycare spaces in its three licensed

centres and its private Home Day Care Agency.

The plan suggests Halton increase its contribution to the market by 50 per cent because of the increase in need expected between now and 1994. This suggestion is tempered by budget requirements, although at present the money is available, says Joe Rinaldo, Regional Commissioner of Finance. "The question is whether it will be available in 1994," he said.

The plan also suggests a quality check of daycare services. The final implementation is unclear but Ms Ewart suggested it might take the form of a visit by police or public health officials upon registration of a daycare and then an annual visit to maintain standards. Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy wondered if the Region should be getting involved in daycare quality.

"Did the daycare providers ask that we come in and regulate them?" he asked. Ms Ewart told him that people who require the service wanted professionalism and that those in the industry wanted their business associated with quality. "It is not intrusive to those daycare providers who have a quality service," she said.

Karen Chan of Halton's Social Services Department said the Region's involvement would be to collect and share information and begin a soft monitoring program for public health reasons.

"If you keep hitting a sore enough times it begins to bleed," said Mr. Pomeroy. "We don't want to get into regulating something that we never intended to regulate."

"The quality of child care is as important as the quality of fast food hamburgers," said Kevin Flynn, the chairman of the Health and Social Services Committee. "We regulate the quality of food and we should regulate the quality of child care."

Mr. Pomeroy said that it was his job to question the regulation plan.

He took exception to Mr. Flynn's comments on being responsible to the public and said, "I'll question any aspect of the plan which I deem necessary, in a responsible manner."

The plan is subject to the budget process and could change because of dollar requirements. Most of the policies are relatively low cost initiatives which address the key problems of information and quality control.

A&P open . . .

from A&P on page 1
during the last few months in an effort to have the Sunday shopping laws changed.

The province turned the issue over to each individual municipality last year, a move which has caused fear of a domino effect. If one municipality allows Sunday shopping, the drain on retailers in nearby centres will force them to demand Sunday shopping.

Ray Andela, manager of the A&P on Laurier Avenue, said that his business was good on Sunday with advertisements indicating the store opening in two Toronto daily newspapers. It is corporate policy to ask for volunteers to work the Sunday shifts and Mr. Andela said he had plenty of employees willing to work the time.

In Oakville police forgot to check stores Saturday to see if they were open. New legislation requires stores to close one day each week and since police could not be sure the stores had not closed the charges laid for the Sunday openings were invalid. The situation will be corrected this weekend police say.

Halton Chairman Peter Pomeroy has said that the grocery retailers are breaking the law and they should be charged. The retailers claim that they are treated unfairly because grocery outlets in the Region are opening under the guise of fruit stores which are allowed to remain open under the Retail Business Holidays Act.



One of three

Photo by JOHN WARREN

Milton District High School students (from left to right) Marc Rader, Christina Edwards and Jason Hilbrand rehearse a scene from *Who Am I This Time*, one of three productions in Dramosaic which will be staged at the school tomorrow night and Friday. Curtain time for both shows is 7:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$4 for students and \$5 for adults. Call 878-2839.

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